



16 MARCH PROGRAM: Michel is well known to many PSSC members. For those who are not familiar with him he provided the following biographical information as an introduction to his talk.

I started collecting when I was ten when a friend of my father's gave me an album and a cigar box filled with stamps. By the age of 17, I was collecting only the British Commonwealth. By age 20 I limited my collecting to Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand.

When I went to university, I sold everything because - "one needs to be serious about one's studies!"

The day I graduated, I started collecting again. I was starting a career as a weather forecaster. I was told that for the first few years I should expect to move often. I limited myself to countries with only a few stamps: the British Consulate Post Office at Bangkok and Heligoland are the only two areas that have survived. In time, I added the Straits Settlements and as thematics, I collect meteorological themes, Canadiana on foreign stamps, and a few other areas just for fun.

Last year my book: "British Consulate Post Office at Bangkok 1855 to 1885" was published by The Stuart Rossiter Trust in the UK. It is the result of 40 years of research, and it is the basis for what I will be presenting.

I was invited to join the PSSC in 1990. I was Secretary for three years, Vice-President for six years and since 2017, I have been the website-coordinator. I was the editor of the PSSC Journal for eleven years.

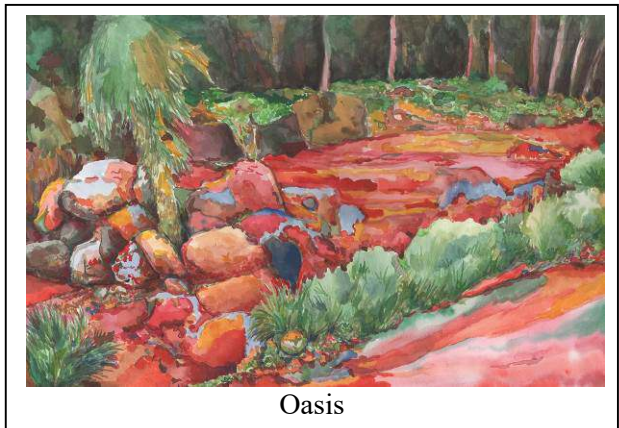
Although I specialise, I have kept a broad interest in social philately and will thus always be able to find things of interest. My philosophy is to share whatever information I have that may be of use to collectors.

MICHEL HOUDE WINS THE PSSC HEBERT DUBÉ LECTURESHIP AWARD:

After the presentation on his recent publication *British Consulate Post Office at Bangkok 1855 – 1885*, Michel Houde was presented with the highest honour of PSSC Awards. The Herbert Dubé Lectureship Award is granted to PSSC members who have published a scholarly philatelic work, and at some point, given a PSSC lecture on the subject. Those requirements were fulfilled at the March 16

meeting and the well-deserved prize was awarded to Michel. The award consists of a special certificate, a medal and an original work of Canadian art.

This time the artwork is a watercolour landscape entitled *Oasis* by Tomas Del Balso, an artist from Prince Edward County of Ontario. He has exhibited in Toronto and New York, and a selection of his works can be seen on Instagram. See the image of the painting which will be presented to Michel at the next in person occasion. The artwork was anonymously donated.



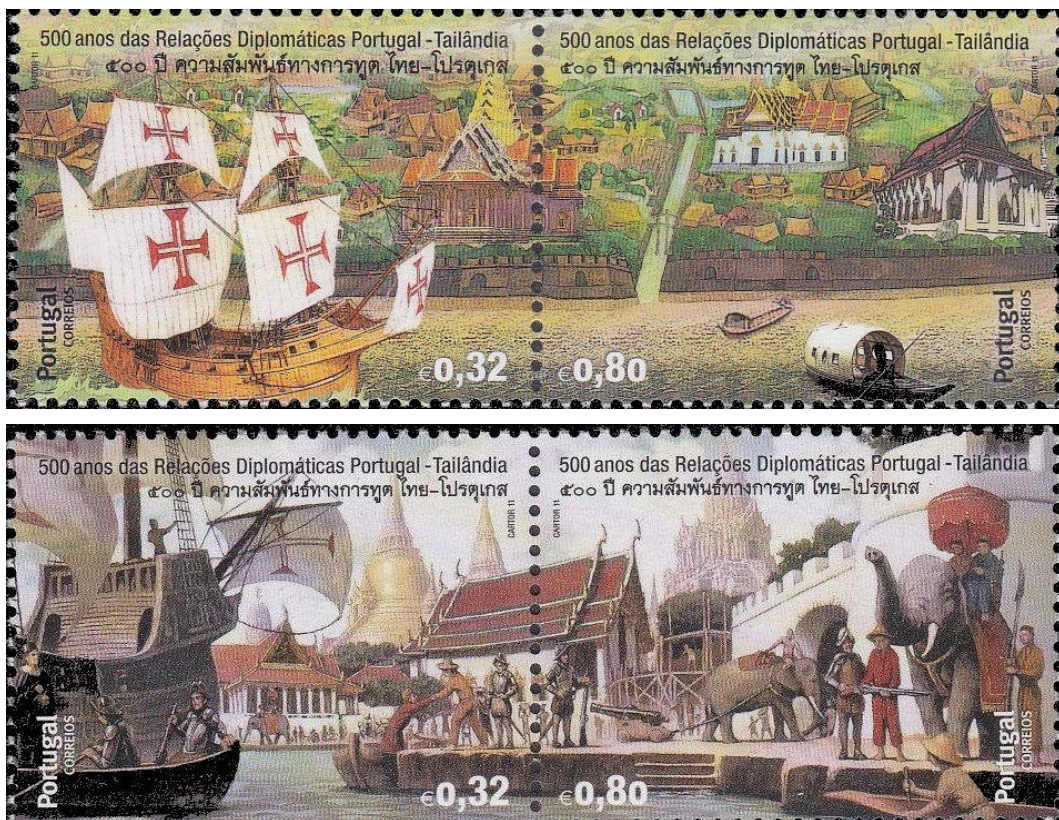
Oasis



Michel Houde

The British Post Office at Bangkok from 1855-1885

Why Was There A Post Office At The British Consulate In Bangkok?



500th Anniversary of Thailand-Portugal Diplomatic Relations - 20 July 2011

In 1350, Ayutthaya, the capital of Siam before Bangkok, was founded on an island in the Chao Phraya River 120 km from its mouth on the Gulf of Thailand. At its height it had a population estimated at a million. It was a vibrant state, which for a long period welcomed foreign contact and trade. The Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French were eager for trade and for converts to Christianity.

During the 1688 revolution in Siam the pro-foreign King Narai was killed, and most westerners were driven out. Regular ties with the West were not renewed for 150 years.

On 17 April 1767 Ayutthaya was sacked by the Burmese. Thai General Taksin repulsed the invaders and made himself King (reigned 1767-1782). He established his capital at Thonburi, located across the river from the village of Bangkok.

The Portuguese opened a Consulate at Bangkok in 1820.

In 1833 American Baptist Missions set up permanent residence in Bangkok.

King Mongkut (Rama IV, reigned 1851-1868) ascended the throne in 1851 and evaded colonisation by promoting modernisation and openness to the West.



1855 April 18 the Bowring Treaty between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Siam was signed. Under the treaty British subjects in Bangkok were allowed freer trade and they could buy land. A Consulate with extraterritorial jurisdiction was allowed. The treaty was the model for other countries that rushed to establish themselves in Siam.

Siam had no internal post service before 1883. The Siamese people had little need for correspondence. Few Siamese could write or needed to since they tended to remain their entire lives in the same village. People did not travel much and if they did it was by rivers and canals since much of the country was jungle. The only persons needing to correspond were the King, his nobles, and some merchants. It is thought that in olden times the King's letters were rolled up and placed inside a length of hollow bamboo and carried by messengers.



The British Consulate commenced handling foreign mail shortly after the Bowring Treaty between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of Siam was signed on 18 April 1855. Once Siam began to open to international trade, its commerce especially with Singapore increased greatly. Merchants, Westerners, and other consulates pressured the British Consulate to allow them to use its mail bag service. Eventually this led to the establishment of an unofficial sub-Post Office of the Singapore Post Office.

Siam saw that it needed to establish its postal service so on 2 July 1881 King Chulalongkorn appointed his youngest brother Prince Bhanurangsi (1859-1928) as Director-General of the Post and Telegraph Department (image at left). There were many challenges to the job including the numbering of houses, registration of the occupants and opposition by some. Last names did not become legally required in Thailand until 1913 adding a further challenge to setting up the postal system.



From left to right: 1 solot (½ att), 1 att, 1 sio (2 att), 1 sik (4 att) and 1 salung (16 att).

Siam issued its first set of postage stamps on 4 August 1883 the same day the internal Postal Service started. William Ridgeway designed and engraved the stamps, which depicted a portrait of King Chulalongkorn. The English firm of Waterlow & Sons printed the five values. The lettering and values are in Siamese making the stamps usable only within the country.

In 1885, after the local post in Bangkok had been running successfully, Siam's Minister in Paris declared that the country was ready to join the UPU. On 1 July 1885 Siam officially joined the UPU at the conference held in Lisbon. Once a member of the UPU, Siam took over the receipt and despatch of foreign mail from the British Consulate's Post Office.



The British Post Office 1855 to 1885



River View of the British Consulate - the boathouse is on the left

The Anglo-Siamese Treaty was signed by John Bowring on 18 April 1855. When British Consul Hillier arrived in Bangkok in June 1856, he established his headquarters at a rented building called the British Factory until a proper Consulate could be built. King Mongkut helped the Consulate to acquire a tract of land next to the

Portuguese Consulate on the banks of the Chao Phya River. Sir Robert Schomburgk, Hillier's successor, was the first one to occupy the new building (see above image) when the Consulate officially opened for business on 1 January 1858. Bangkok had few roads at the time, so people got around by boat. The Consulate had a boat house next to it and employed boatmen to ferry people, produce and mail.

Initially mail was handled by the First Assistant at the Consulate. As volume increased the duties of Postmaster were transferred to the Chief Constable. As the volume increased further the Chief Constable became fulltime Postmaster.

By 1882 an agreement was worked out with the Singapore Post Office to set up an unofficial sub-Post Office at Bangkok. The Treasury in Singapore supplied Straits Settlements Stamps overprinted with a large "B" for use at Bangkok. Despite this, clients could use the stamps of the Straits Settlements, Hong Kong, and the UK.

Covers

Some 140 covers are known mailed through the Consulate.

To San Francisco 1 Oct 1858



Unpaid Envelope

To Boston 1 Sep 1859

Earliest use of Indian stamps



Singapore used Indian Stamps at this time.

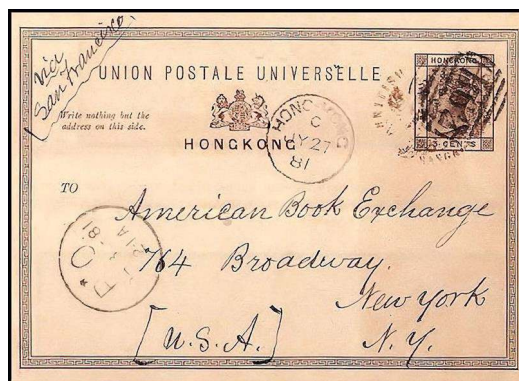


To Saigon 1 Oct 1867 – Lettersheet



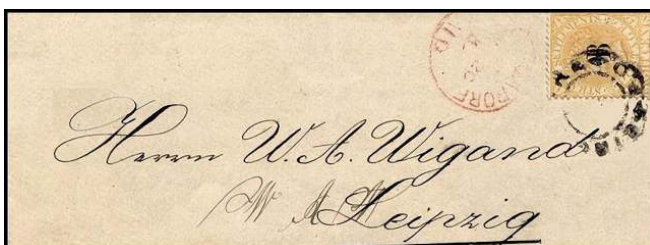
Earliest use of the overprinted Straits Settlements issue which came into use on 1 Sep 1867

To New York July 1881 - Hong Kong PSC



Hong Kong stamps and PSCs could be used.

To Leipzig May 1882 – Envelope



The earliest use of a “B” overprint stamp on cover

To Germany Dec 1883 - Siam PSC



Combined use of Siam PSC & Bangkok “B”
The Siamese PSC was only valid in Siam.
It paid for delivery to the Consulate.
The red B-Stamp paid for foreign delivery.

To London 18 Feb 1884 – Envelope



This cover probably originated from a naval vessel anchored at Bangkok. Sailors benefitted of concessionary rate.

To Salzwedel 27 May 1884 - Envelope



Combination cover with a Straits Settlements stamp and Bangkok “B” stamp.



“B”-Overprinted Stamps



The British Consulate Post Office at Bangkok received a shipment of “B”-overprinted stamps approximately once a month. The first shipment was on 15 April 1882. The last shipment occurred on 27 May 1885. In total 51,420 stamps are recorded having been supplied to Bangkok. Collectors have recognized that there are two types of Bs.

Obliterators & Cancellations



The Book

After 40 years of collecting and researching I finally put all that I knew to paper. The book was finally published by The Stuart Rossiter Trust, Chichester, UK in 2021.

Many collectors, librarians and researchers help gather the information. Many collectors, expertizing services, and auction houses generously permitted me to use their images. Countless emails and letters were exchanged to seek out and check facts and details.

I am thankful to everyone who made this book possible.

Once a book is published inevitably new information is revealed, and error and omissions are discovered. To handle these, I have created a website as an Update Centre for the book:

<https://michelhoude.com/Book-Update/Index.html>

